

THE ART OF THE

# UNCHARTED

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TRILOGY™



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Foreword by Erick Pangilinan



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*Erick Pangilinan*

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Naughty Dog, and Kat Larson, Nick McWhorter, and Andrea Sanders at Dark Horse Comics*

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Published by Dark Horse Books  
A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.  
10956 SE Main Street  
Milwaukie, OR 97222

DarkHorse.com

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International Licensing: (503) 905-2377

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The art of the Uncharted trilogy / editor, Brendan Wright. -- First edition.  
pages cm

Summary: "This coffee table book traces the development of the first three games in the successful Uncharted franchise by presenting production art from each game, along with commentary by the studio"-- Provided by publisher.  
ISBN 978-1-61655-487-3 (hardback)

1. Video games--Pictorial works. 2. Video games in art. I. Wright, Brendan, editor of compilation. II. Title.

GV1469.37.A67 2015  
794.8--dc23

2014031092

First print edition: April 2015  
Digital ISBN 978-1-62115-935-3



A full-page background image of Nathan Drake from the Uncharted series. He is shown from the waist up, wearing a dark t-shirt and a tactical vest. He is holding a handgun in his right hand, which is extended forward. He has a determined expression. The background is a hazy, rocky landscape with some wooden structures and debris.

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# FOREWORD

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During the *Crash Bandicoot* and *Jak and Daxter* years, our art team was assembled to produce largely cartoon-style games. But in 2004, we started working on a new IP for the PlayStation 3, one with a distinctly different, more realistic style.

The transition period between PlayStations 2 and 3 was a challenging time to work at Naughty Dog. The PlayStation 3 hardware came in late, and the spec was dauntingly complex. Meanwhile, our new project found itself in a constant state of flux, as we engaged in endless debate about the direction of the game and the art style. As if wrangling a new system and inventing a new IP weren't hard enough, we also went through a management transition when our original copresidents left the company, creating a vacuum that forced team leaders into new roles. The studio, which was used to a flat hierarchy, strained as the size of the team rapidly grew. We were forced to adopt a slightly more top-down approach yet retain the creative benefits of our traditional flat structure. Like a dark storm brewing on the horizon, these converging factors collectively seemed like a perfect recipe for disaster. As the months wore on, it became clear that *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* was a project that would define the future of Naughty Dog. Either it would lead our studio to its greatest success or destroy it altogether.

In contrast with our previous projects, the new game had to be realistic, which required new software and pipelines to upgrade the quality of our characters, animation, and environments. We needed a retooled team that could sculpt and rig realistic, high-resolution characters. Our animators, long used to handcrafted cartoon animation, had to shift to a performance-based motion-capture pipeline. This new workflow enabled us to capture more natural interactions between actors and pair their dialogue seamlessly, but radically increased complexity. The shift to naturalistic settings radically increased the density and fidelity of our game world, and our environment team had to adapt to these changes. Levels that on the PlayStation 2 took only a few weeks now took months. Coming off the ambitious *Jak and Daxter* series, the designers doubled down and crafted a game of staggering scope and complexity. That scale, combined with the more complicated technical and graphical requirements of the new platform, caused the team roster to balloon to nearly double its previous size.

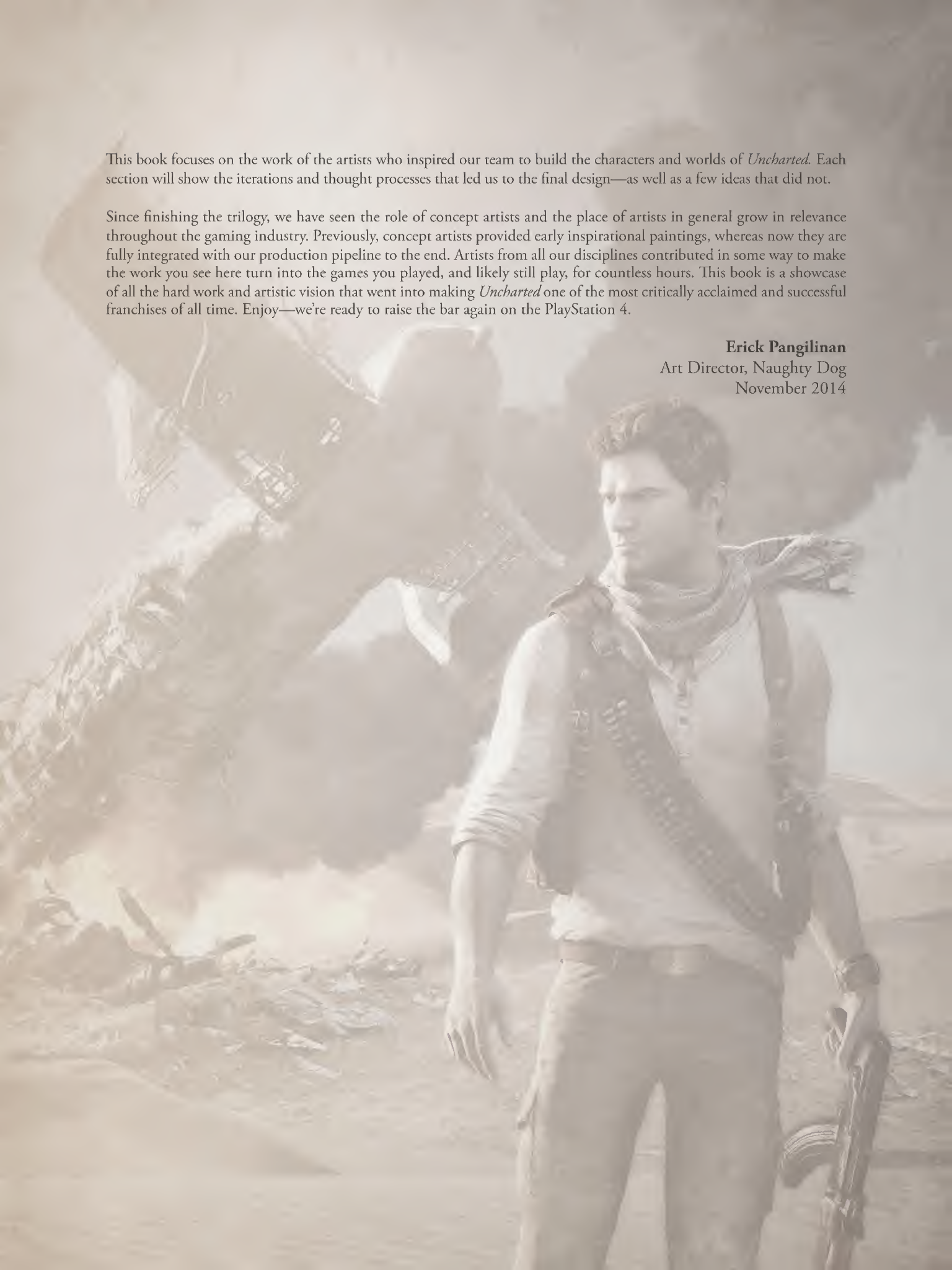
Even for a studio used to thriving in creative chaos, production on the first *Uncharted* redefined “challenging.” During most of the project, nothing was set in stone, or even clearly defined—story, design, tools, pipeline, or technology. We had to rebuild the engine that ran our games from scratch. Every element was under constant redesign, yet the PlayStation 3 hardware launch was set, and the schedule demanded the team race forward. Team members used to a more organized grind quit on a weekly basis, not just individual contributors, but leads and other people with critical assignments. These setbacks dragged our schedule out by months. Fortunately, enough core senior Naughty Dogs in each department picked up the pieces and powered through. Throughout the struggle, a single-minded determination to ship a first-rate game remained the sole constant.

In classic Naughty Dog fashion, the chaos of *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* was tamed in the end. Its launch served as a huge morale boost. Positive public reception validated our efforts and inspired us to push forward on a sequel, incorporating nearly every great idea that didn't make it into the first game. The second time around, the team structure was more settled, the art and design vision clear, the production pipeline defined, and the tools workable. Now it was possible to handle an even grander scope of work, and the designers took advantage. Improvements were made incrementally in every department and aspect of the game. Programmers pumped up the efficiency of the cell processor, allowing significantly improved graphics. Artists more confident in their process produced substantially better work. Designers, more grounded by having the basics in place, were able to innovate with new scenarios and gameplay mechanics.

These improvements led to *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* being one of the most successful titles in the history of PlayStation and, arguably, gaming. The game swept awards in almost all categories and earned an aggregate score of 96/100 on Metacritic. Confident in our vision and eager to set the bar higher, we wrapped up the trilogy, releasing *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* in 2011, to great commercial and critical success. The art and tech of *Uncharted 3* was an evolutionary refinement of the already groundbreaking *Uncharted 2*. The repeated success of the series opened a flood of new talent into the company. This new blood injected additional ideas, techniques, and improvements into our process.

*The Art of the Uncharted Trilogy* covers the vast array of environments and characters we developed over the last ten years. Each finalized concept had to be designed, modeled, rigged, textured, and lit by our army of artists and designers. While concept art is not shipped with the final product, it remains a critical part of the production process from beginning to end.





This book focuses on the work of the artists who inspired our team to build the characters and worlds of *Uncharted*. Each section will show the iterations and thought processes that led us to the final design—as well as a few ideas that did not.

Since finishing the trilogy, we have seen the role of concept artists and the place of artists in general grow in relevance throughout the gaming industry. Previously, concept artists provided early inspirational paintings, whereas now they are fully integrated with our production pipeline to the end. Artists from all our disciplines contributed in some way to make the work you see here turn into the games you played, and likely still play, for countless hours. This book is a showcase of all the hard work and artistic vision that went into making *Uncharted* one of the most critically acclaimed and successful franchises of all time. Enjoy—we're ready to raise the bar again on the PlayStation 4.

**Erick Pangilinan**

Art Director, Naughty Dog

November 2014

# UNCHARTED™

DRAKE'S FORTUNE









*Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*

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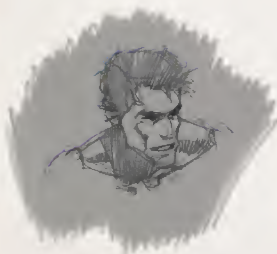
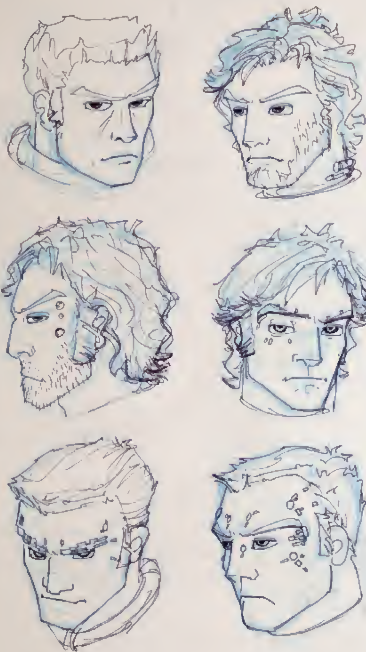
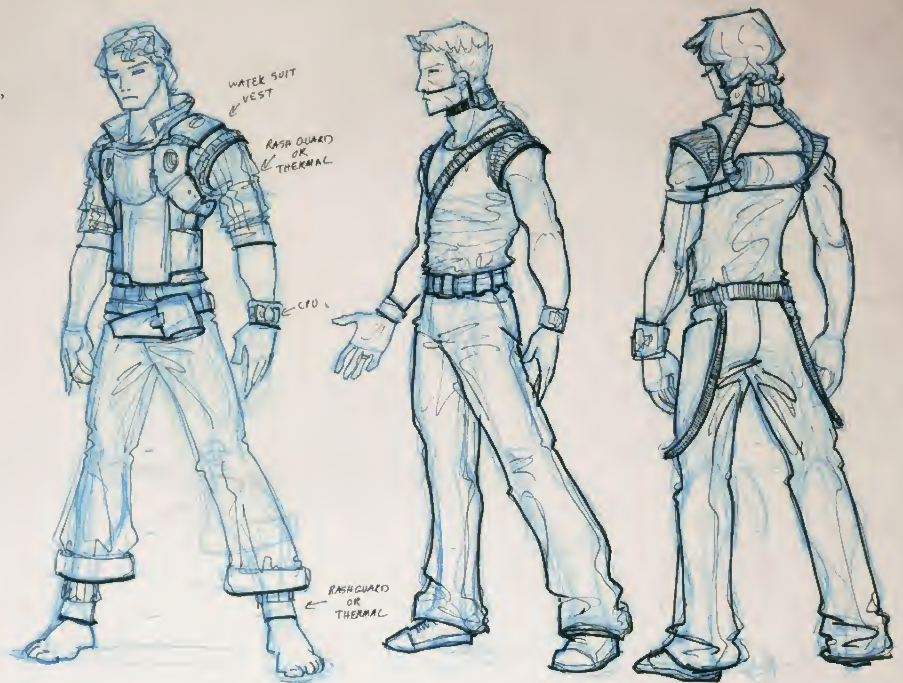
# CHARACTER DESIGN

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# DRAKE

Before Nathan Drake was Nathan Drake, we explored a lot of ideas. This page shows some of the earliest explorations. Right from the start, we were going for an everyman look. This was not only a departure from the standard design perspective, but it presented us with technical challenges that we wouldn't have dealt with if our hero had been wearing hard-surfaced, metallic armor. We needed to render his hair and make his clothes fit and move realistically.

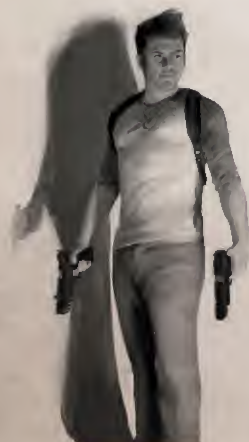


*At this point, we were not even sure what style of game we were making. Some of these designs had futuristic elements and exaggerated fashion. It was a real challenge to create a character we were comfortable with and could build an entire world around.*





*Nathan Drake's design had to resonate with the audience, so that players relate to him. Selecting clothes like jeans, a baseball shirt, and common sneakers help make his character familiar.*

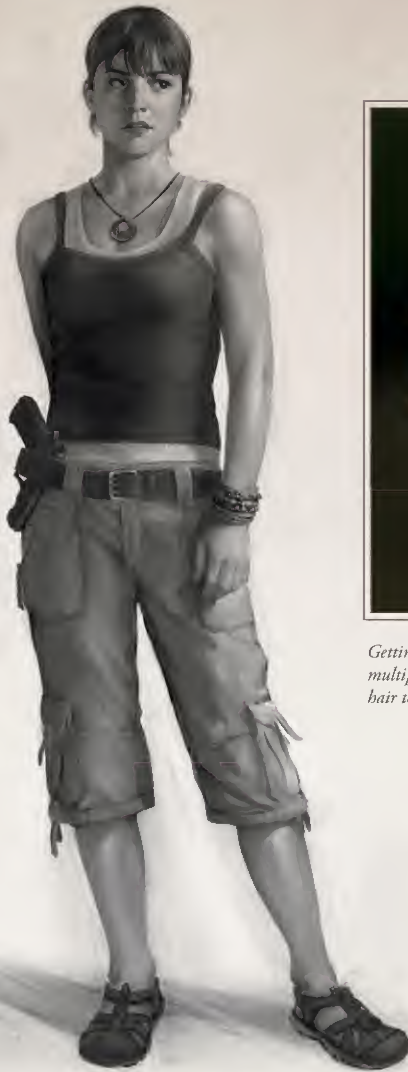


*Early sketches of Nathan Drake made him look younger than the final version. We wanted a happy-go-lucky kind of guy, who should probably be dead, given the risks he takes, but somehow manages to find a way to overcome impossible odds.*



## ELENA

Elena Fisher was to be Drake's love interest, but she also had to be a strong character who could go toe-to-toe with Nate. As a reporter who often works solo, she's learned to handle herself in just about any situation. But even she didn't know what she was in for when her path crossed with Nate's as they used one another to help recover the coffin of Sir Francis Drake, buried at sea off the coast of Panama.



*Getting Elena's look right involved several iterations and multiple hairstyles. Ultimately, we decided to change her hair to blond and make it longer.*

*We create a lot of sketches for all of our characters to show the range of their emotions and personality. In Uncharted this helped to define their unique traits and habits, as well as give them the proper voice.*







## SULLY

As Drake's mentor and father figure, Victor Sullivan was envisioned as balancing macho toughness with a degree of approachability. He served in the US Navy and later became a professional treasure hunter. Sully is the stable figure on the team. We wanted him to look confident and experienced but also as if he might have a questionable past. Even if he is motivated by money, he is a good guy inside and does the right thing in the end.



*Explorations of Sully's range of emotion. It was critical for us to be able to capture just about any of Sully's expressions with his trademark cigar in his mouth.*



## ATOQ NAVARRO

Navarro is a treacherous lieutenant in Gabriel Roman's gang. He ultimately betrays his boss and goes head-to-head with Drake. We wanted someone to counterbalance Drake's character and who could be his archnemesis—someone who would be his worthy match in a climactic fight scene. Navarro's high cheekbones and strong chin give him distinct South American characteristics—handsome and dangerous. We used angular shapes and deep-set features to give him a more aggressive look.

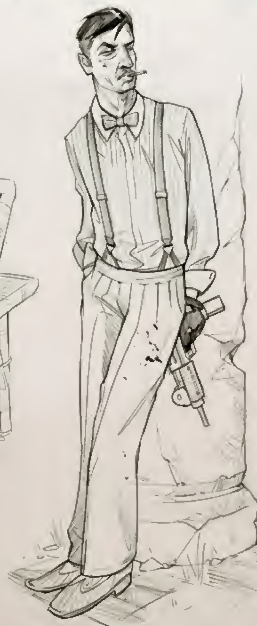
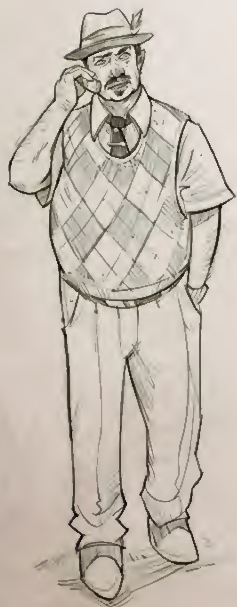


*Clothing design for each character was important in separating them from each other by shape and color. For Navarro, we chose dark, earthy colors to contrast him with Drake.*



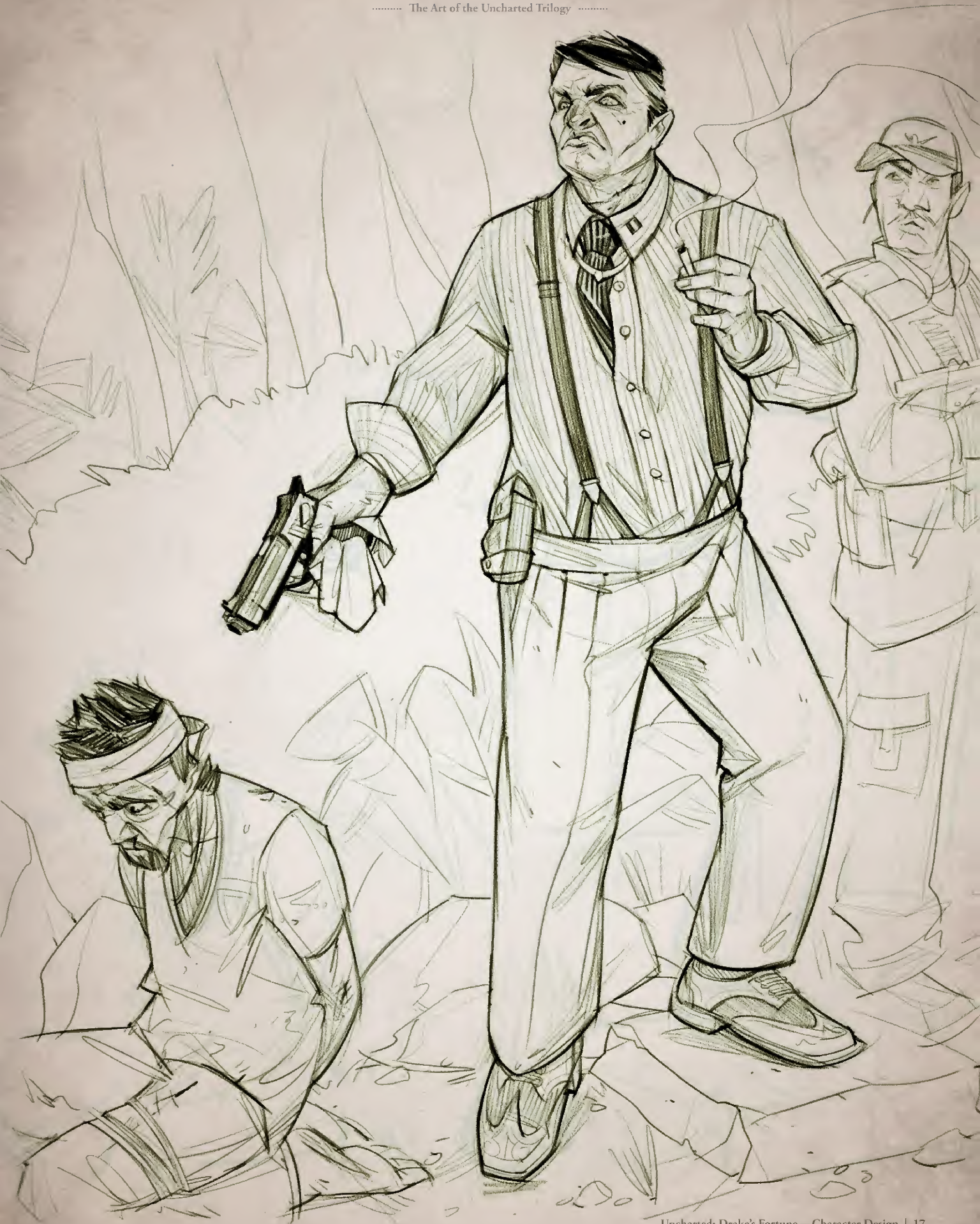
## GABRIEL ROMAN

The main antagonist and a counterbalance to Sully. We wanted him to look like a crime lord and went through several sketches that maybe looked too much like a Mafia don. Ultimately, we made him look more sophisticated but with a cruel side to his personality.



*These sketches explored various kinds of looks for a crime lord, ranging from an obese South American crime boss to a Godfather-style mobster.*







## EDDY RAJA

We wanted a flamboyant but tacky Southeast Asian gangster, who thinks of himself as a cool, gunslinging cowboy. The mixture of bad taste in fashion and a lack of wit best describes this overconfident killer. We dressed him in a patterned silk shirt, leather vest, pinstriped pants, and cowboy boots. He is armed with a cowboy revolver and several daggers.





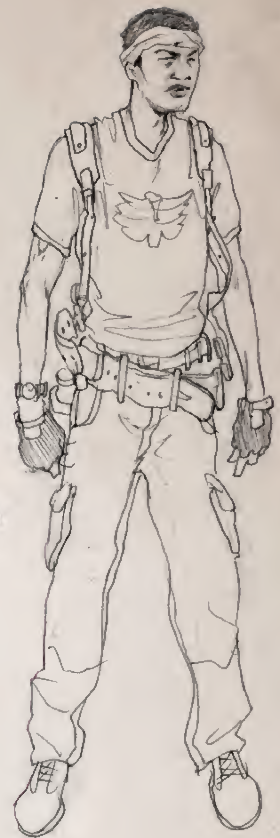




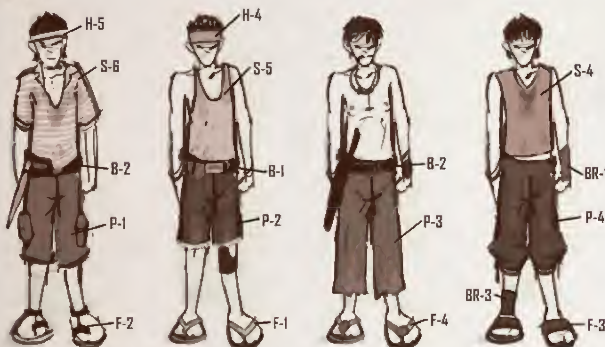
# THE PIRATES

We based these mercenaries on actual pirates off the coast of Africa and guerrilla insurgent groups in Southeast Asia. Mostly dressed for the hot weather in tank tops, shorts, and T-shirts, they are meant to look like people who are poorly paid and desperate but heavily armed.

We tried to create a language for each character class of pirates. There is a link between how a character is armored, colored, and bulked up and their durability and the number of shots needed to take them down. Because we adjusted the difficulty level and challenges of these different classes, it was important to be able to visually differentiate them quickly, so the player could adjust their strategy accordingly.



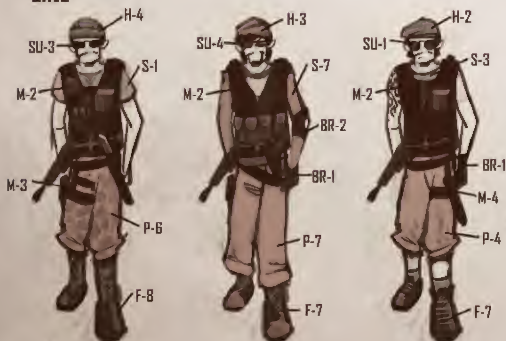
## Rookies



## Gunmen



## Elite



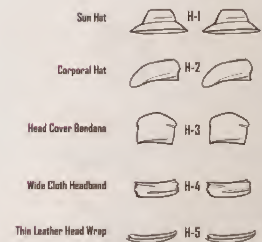
## BRACES



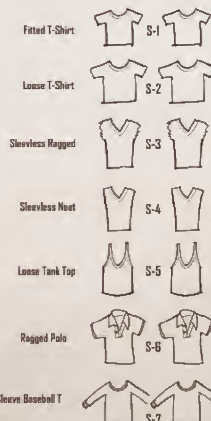
## SUNGLASSES



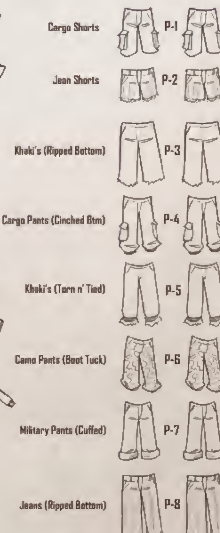
## HEADGEAR



## SHIRTS



## PANTS



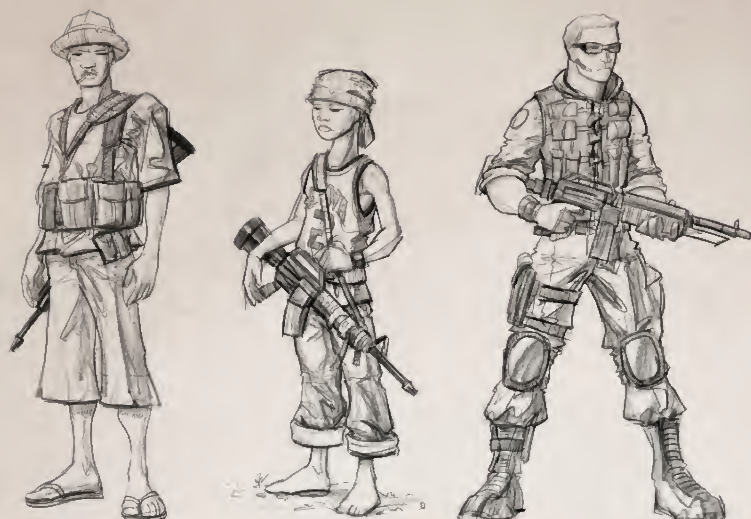
## FOOTWEAR



## MILITARY







*We explored many kinds of mercenaries, with the idea that some of them weren't from the region, so we could vary their weights, heights, and hair and skin colors.*

*Below: Sketches of pirates looking more like modern city gangsters.*

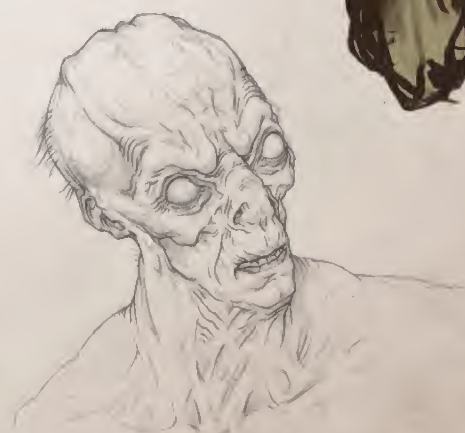
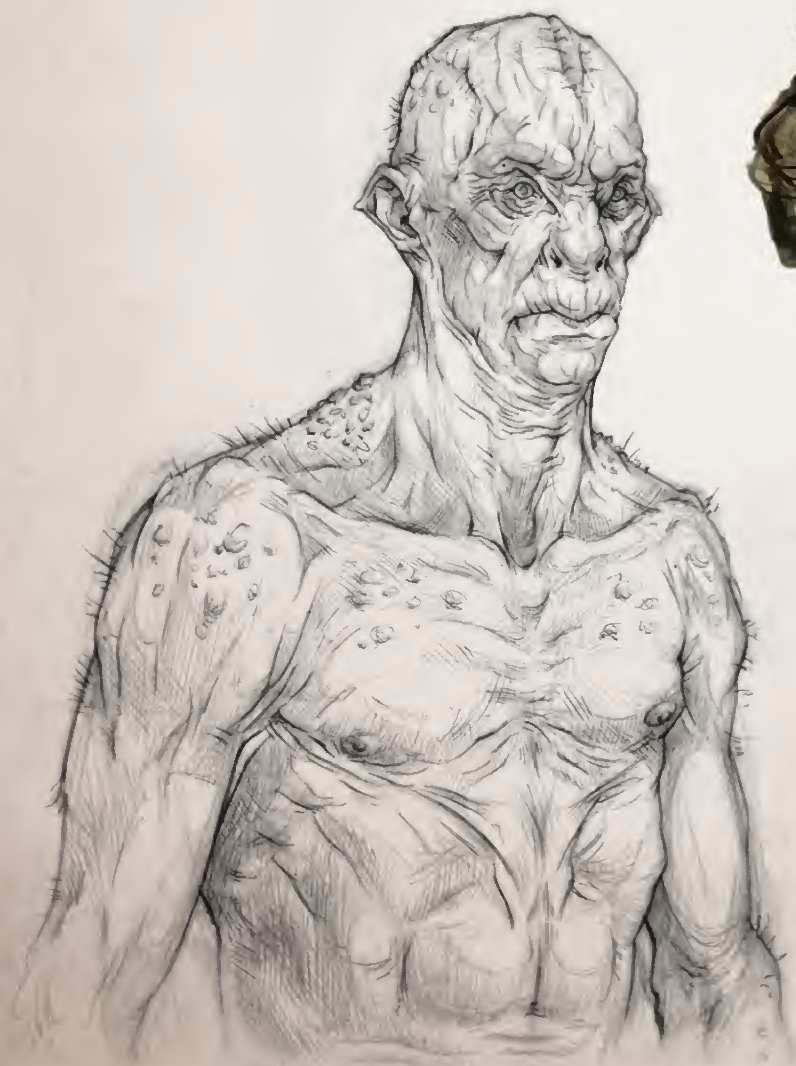






### *The Descendants*

*The designs for the Descendants, the game's mutated and devolved Spanish colonists, were inspired by creature designs of cave-dwelling monsters.*





*Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*

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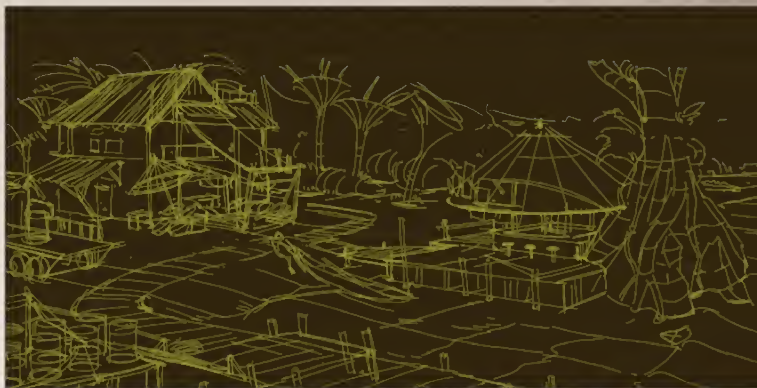
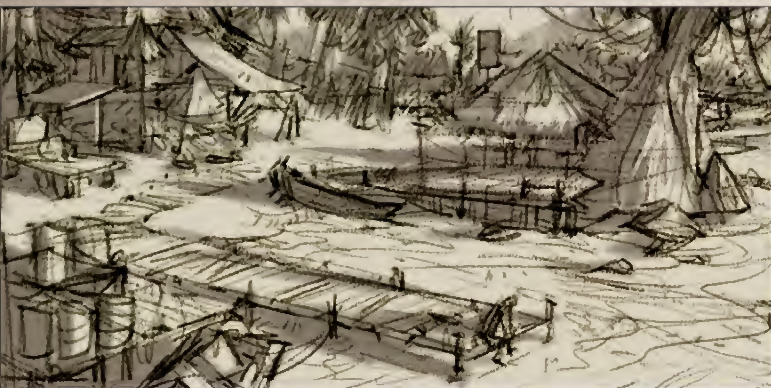
# ENVIRONMENTS

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*This tropical beachfront cottage is one of Sully's secret hideouts. It is featured briefly in the game as the launching point for their adventure.*





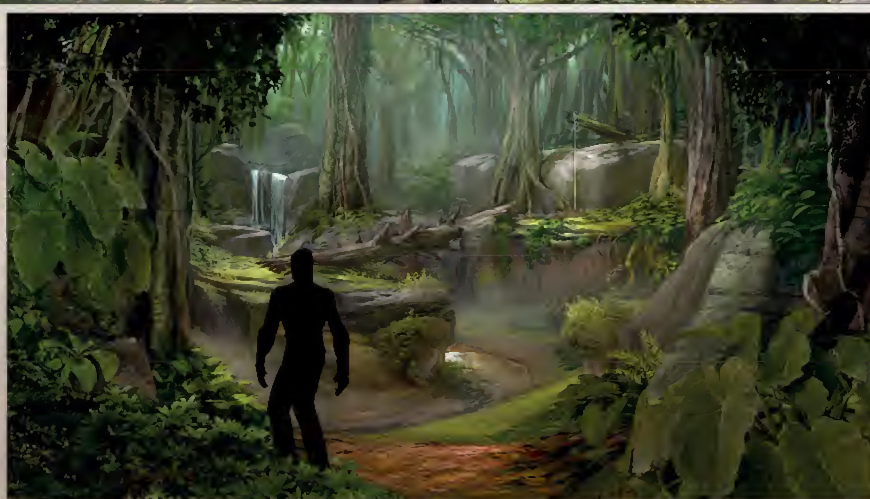
*Probably more elaborate than it should be, the hideout has a bit of an old 1950s tiki vibe, which is consistent with Sully's age and personality.*





## Ruins


*We designed a ruined civilization deep in the Amazon rainforest that held clues regarding the lost city of El Dorado.*



*We wanted the organic jungle trees and vines to cover the geometric shapes of the ruined architecture. Our initial challenge was to create a language for climbing, and having all the horizontal designs engraved on the stone would not help players find a logical climbing ledge. Another problem we needed to tackle was where players could take cover during gunplay.*

*We decided that Drake can only take cover behind man-made structures, not organic elements like tree trunks and rocks, unless they are logs or dead tree trunks lying on their sides.*



The main image shows Nathan Drake in a dynamic pose, jumping or falling through a dark, chaotic mass of wooden beams and debris. He is wearing a green t-shirt, brown pants, and a necklace. In the background, a large, ornate stone structure with intricate carvings is visible, partially obscured by smoke and dust. A smaller inset image in the top right corner shows a different scene with a person standing on a wooden platform surrounded by extensive scaffolding in a similar ancient setting.

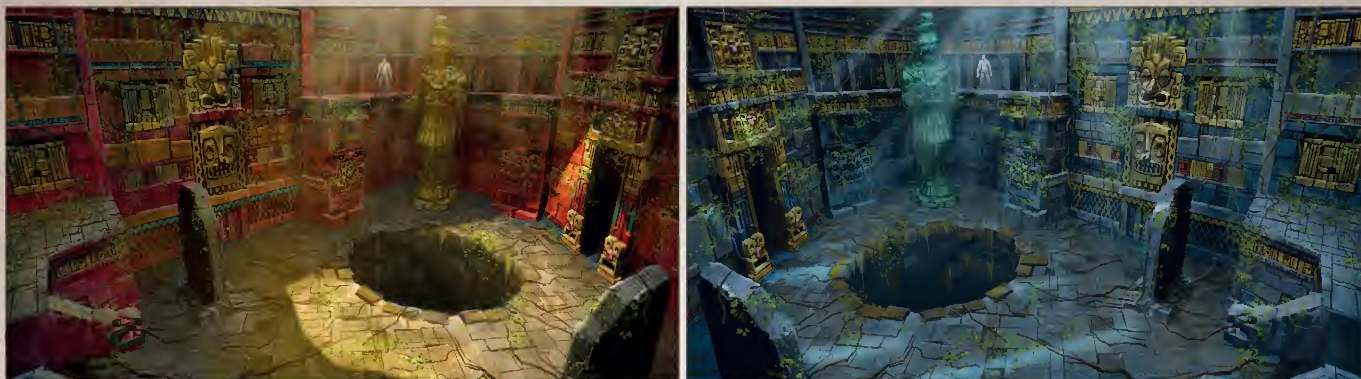
*We designed this creaky old wooden scaffolding that was eventually going to collapse and burn down. These scaffoldings were supposed to have been built by the Spanish conquistadors who looted the temple centuries ago.*



*The environment was meant to be very creepy and dangerous. We designed several elements with sharp spikes and tribal talismans that look like they are for some form of dark-magic worship.*





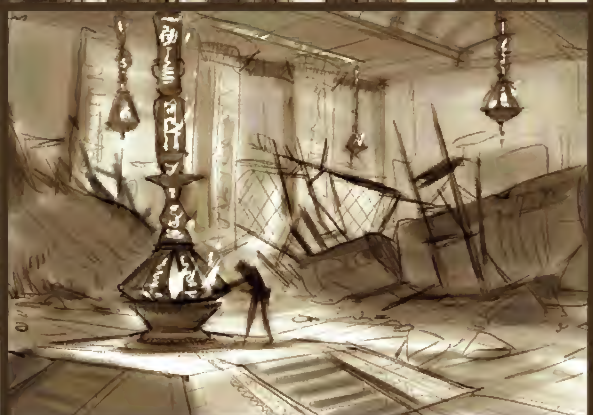
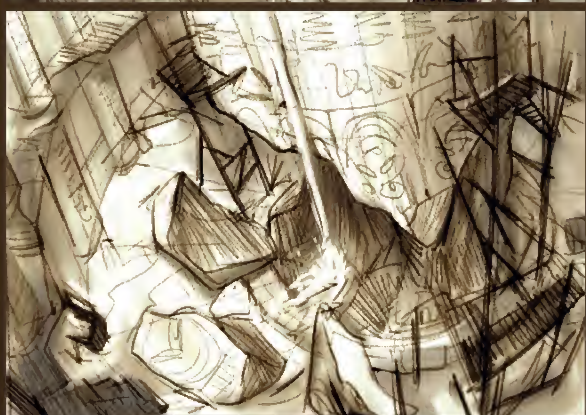
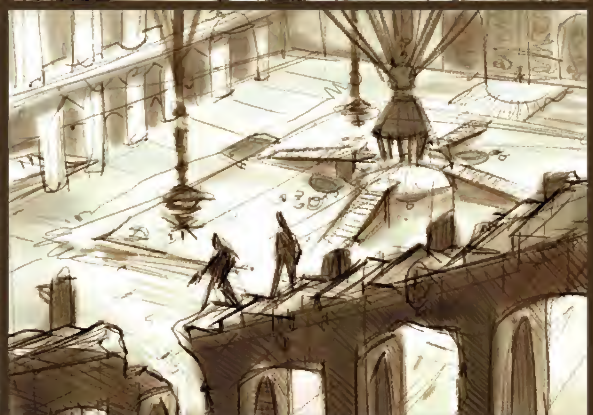
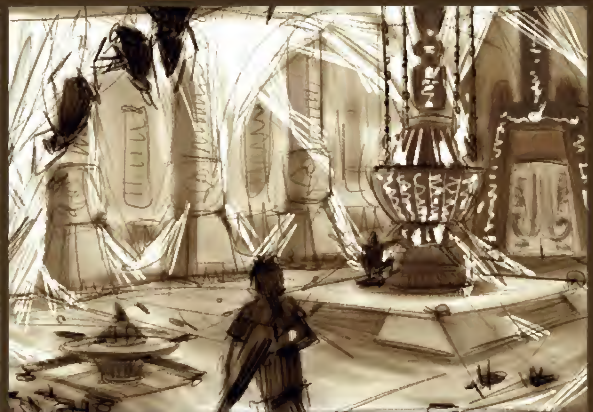
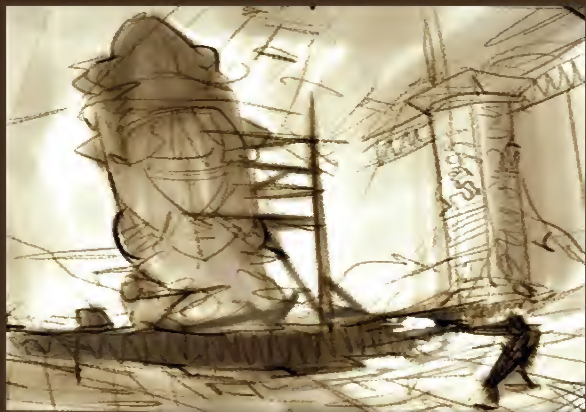


*Lighting has always been a problem when exploring caves and underground ruins. We explored several options for lighting, whether from a hole in the ceiling, fire, or flashlight.*



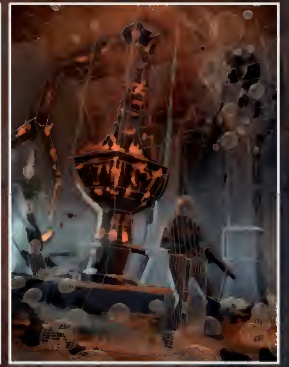
## El Dorado

*We had to design several puzzles and devices that worked mechanically, as if the ancient people had created them with the technology of the time. They were also decorated with the same ancient aesthetic.*



*We originally wanted to have a swarm of spiders attack, but eventually that was cut from this level.*



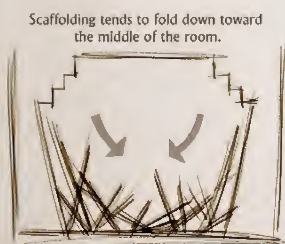


*The swarm of spiders was later included in Uncharted 3, but this early version received quite a bit of development.*

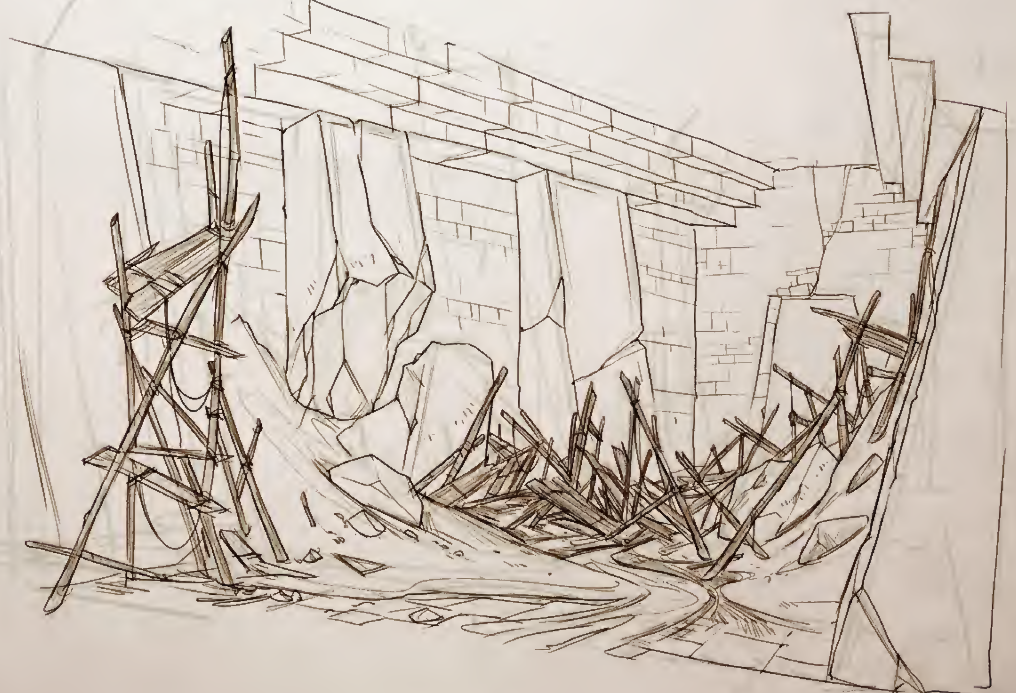
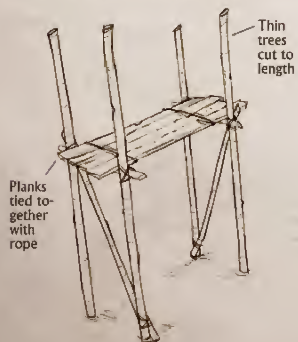




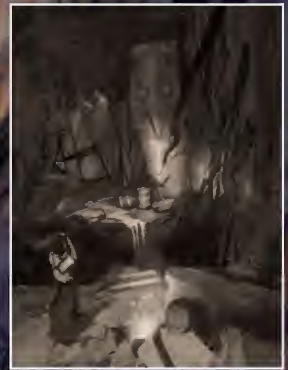
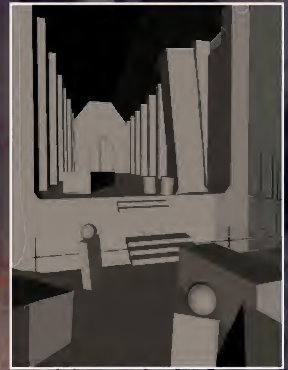
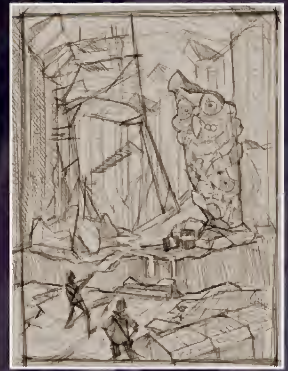
*We created several designs for totem-like columns and pillars. These were used to stand out and attract attention if we wanted players to interact with them or if we hoped to lead their eyes in a certain direction.*



Basic Undamaged Scaffolding Elements







*Designers give our artists puzzles in block mesh, and we try to create a clear shape language that the player can quickly read. Here we made the pillar into a totem so it stands out from the simple pillar, then put in some cracks so it looks like it could fall over.*





### *The U-boat*

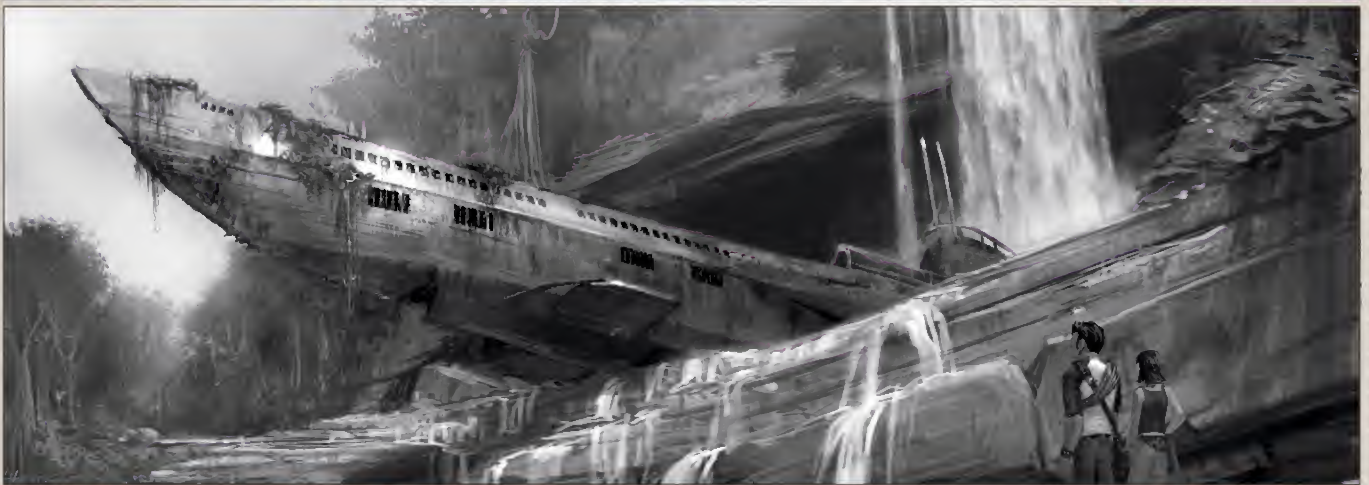
*Putting a U-boat in the middle of the jungle was as puzzling for us as it was for the audience. But we needed to create a compelling visual to frame the U-boat by the river. It's a bit fantastical, but we justified its presence by saying that the river at one time had been deeper and the boat had gotten stuck upstream.*







*We explored different ways to present the submarine in an epic way. We first thought about simply stranding it on a dry riverbed and then we got crazy, with the sub suspended in the treetops or being held by thick vines. Ultimately, we put it on top of the waterfall on a high cliff side. This rewarded players with magnificent views of the surrounding area after reaching the submarine's top.*



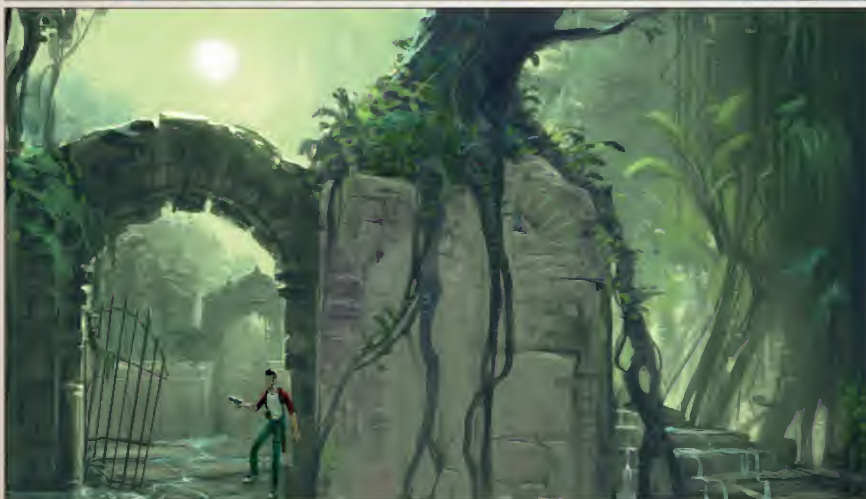




*Sully's plane was named Hog Wild, after a level in Crash Bandicoot. It's loosely based on the Grumman G-21 Goose seaplane.*







### *Escondida*

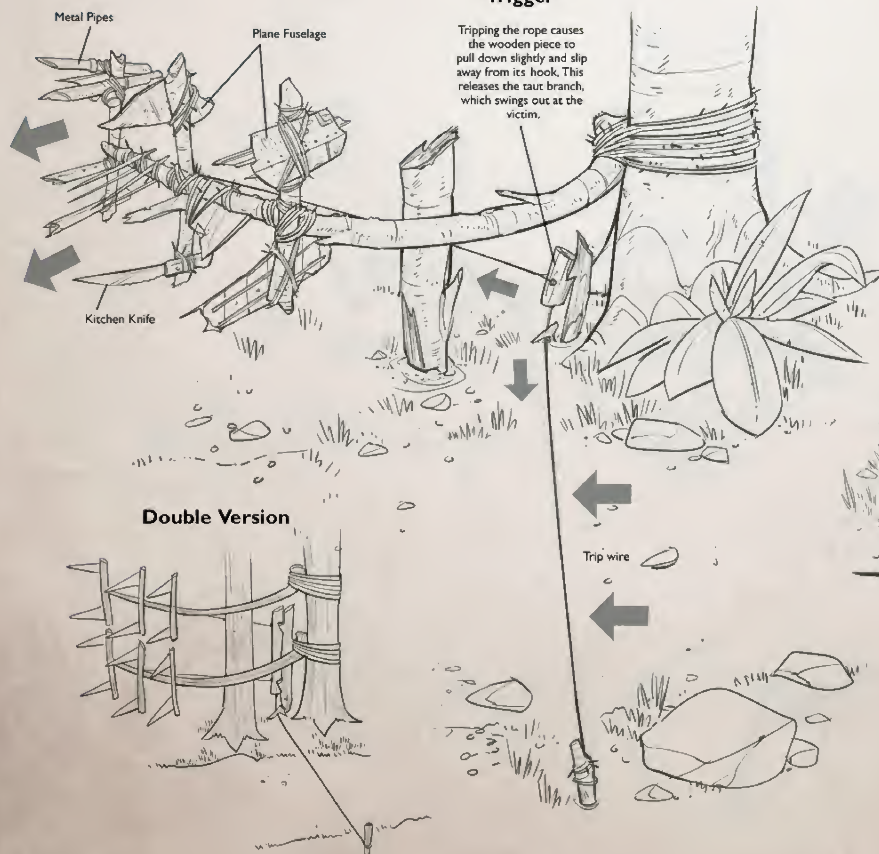
*We did several studies of jungle landscapes and lost cities. We were inspired by the temples of Angkor Wat in Cambodia the most. We liked the idea of trees growing on top of ancient building structures and roots snaking down the walls and wrapping around columns. We had to create a vast library of jungle plants and trees of different sizes to populate our jungle levels.*





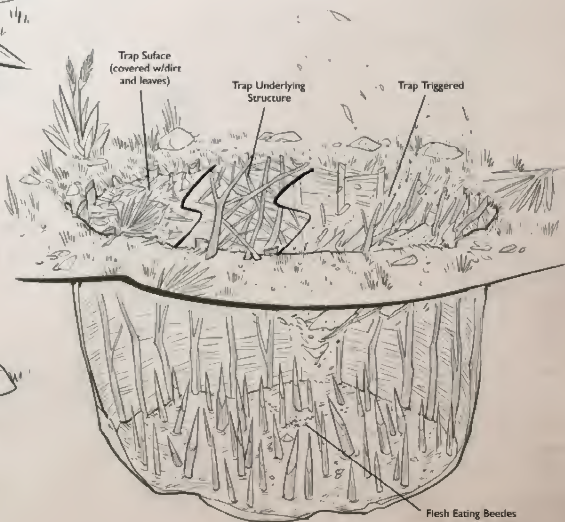
### Trigger

Tripping the rope causes the wooden piece to pull down slightly and slip away from its hook. This releases the taut branch, which swings out at the victim.



*Above: We wanted to focus on the basic mechanics of jumping and gunplay, so we came up with this level on a whitewater river that terminates in a waterfall. There are rocks and small outcroppings for players to jump between to avoid enemies.*

*Jungle traps were one of the elements we added to make the environment more interactive and add to the feeling of danger at every step.*



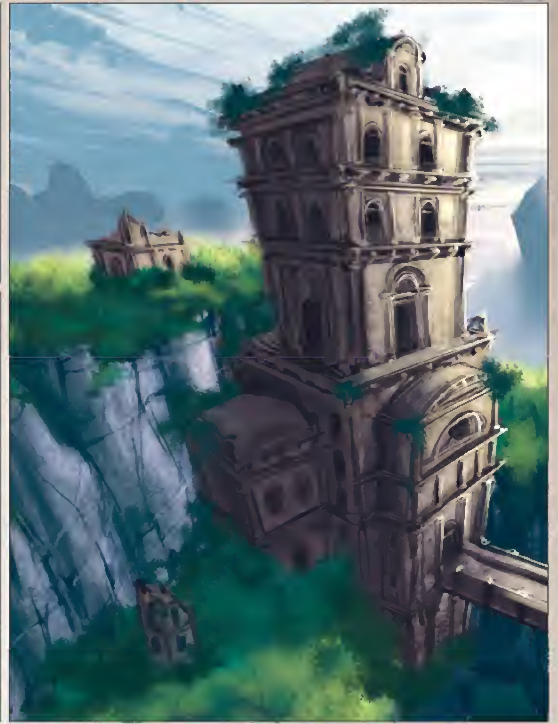




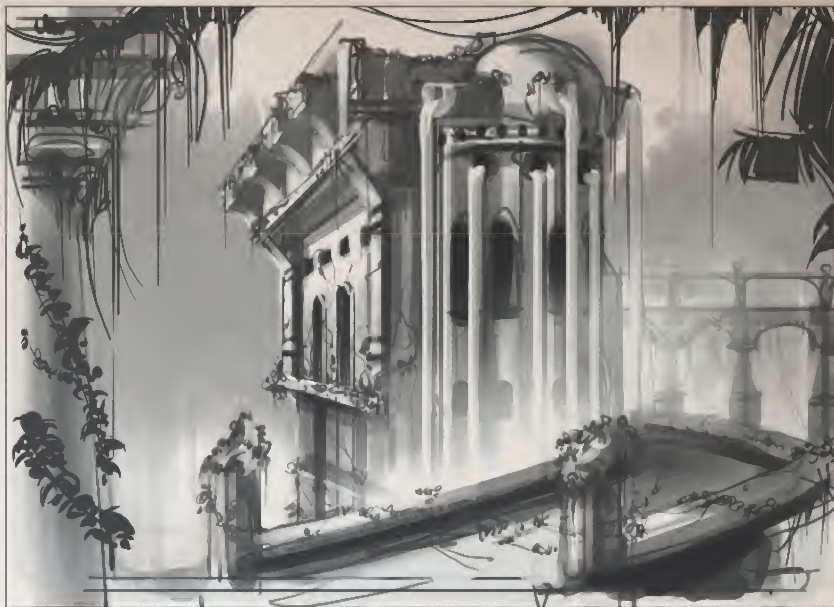


### *The Fortress*

*The final design of the fortress was based on a real fort in Puerto Rico called Fort San Felipe del Morro, but the initial concepts looked more like a church. This was probably because the design called for several structures that did not exist in any fort, like a carillon bell tower and tall, thin façades. This required the team to look for design elements that matched the architecture of a church.*







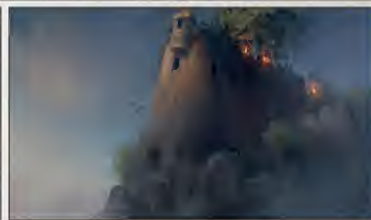
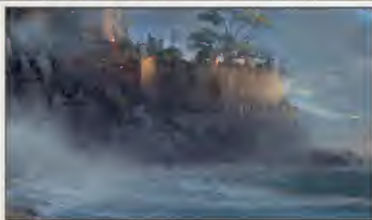
*We went down this road for a while, but it was interesting to see how we still integrated this look with the jungle overgrowth. We really wanted to combine the Cambodian Angkor Wat-style trees with these Spanish-style structures and explore that look.*





*The original idea was for Drake to walk up to the fort from the beach. We made several concepts and environments to show the view of the epic fort from a beachfront.*

*Eventually, we decided to change the architectural style and made it a true fort. We just made the unusual church structures with fort-like construction. For the most part, nobody questioned it. We later designed how the pirates would build around the ruins to accommodate their military equipment and vehicles.*







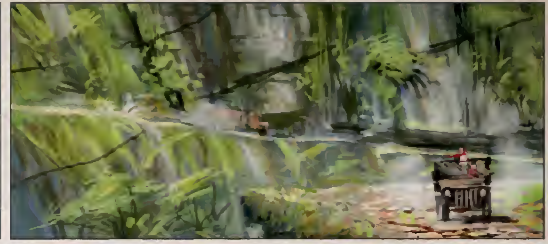
*These camera angles were directly taken from the designer's block-mesh design. This was the first time we used actual design geometry and drew over it. The technique was very useful for the artists and communicated clearly what we wanted the fort to look like.*



*The breakout from the fortress jail is a classic chase-and-shoot gameplay scenario that we try to incorporate into each Naughty Dog game. For this one, since the path happened to be very long, it was important to design several environments to keep players' attention. It needed to match the intensity of being chased by armed pirates and the perils of driving through treacherous but interesting terrain.*





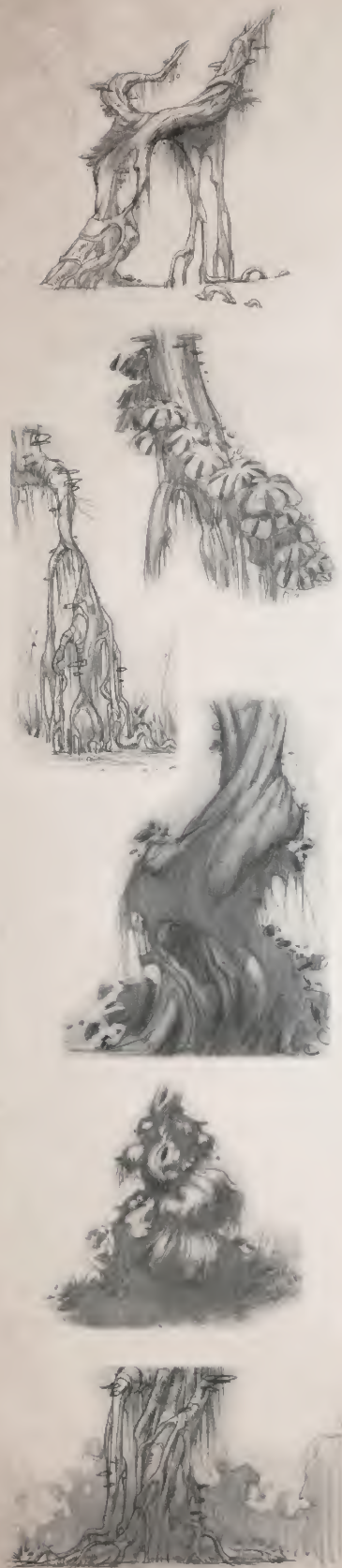


*The jungle chase sequence required several concepts to show a transition from the fortress to the jungle's many areas. We designed Spanish-style bridges, ruins, and roads by the cliffs off the jagged rocks. We got inspired by the most dangerous roads in the world, like the ones in South America or in China where roads were literally carved from the vertical side of the mountain.*



*We incorporated more manmade elements to add interesting juxtapositions. For instance, the initial dirt road concept became an ancient cobblestone road that's deteriorating on a cliff side.*





### *The Drowned City*

*The Drowned City was originally supposed to be completely underwater. But because of the Jet Ski gameplay and how we wanted the player to get on and off the Jet Ski, we decided to make it partially sunken. We did several designs for trees, many inspired by fantasy artist Frank Frazetta's lush jungles and twisted jungle trees.*





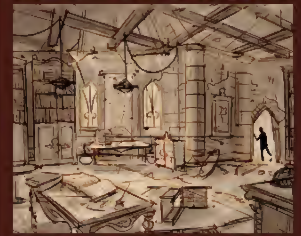
*Driving around with the Jet Ski was another interesting challenge in both the design and the construction of the level. Since a lot of distance is covered on the Jet Ski, we had to create a big level; that was problematic because of the enormous space required to give the gameplay enough room. We also had to develop a way to render convincing ocean water and whitewater rapids. This would include the physics to make players feel like they are floating and propelling themselves upstream and in the rapids. Water is very complicated and expensive to render because of how it flows, how it floats objects and players up and down, and how it reacts to light and shadow, not to mention the transparency required to show geometry beneath it.*











### *The Customs House*

*The Customs House was one of our main levels in the game. It had beautiful Spanish architecture, a big, domed roof, elaborate Spanish tiles, and wrought iron. The floors had cut-marble designs and the stairways were carved. The wooden rope bridge was also very dramatic, as players had to cross this unstable bridge over the sea. One of the challenges with the Customs House was taking the low angle of the lights into consideration, and using it to our advantage to show form and shape within the buildings. Using the openings in the roof slats and port windows, we let in just enough light to give focus and enough darkness to create contrast.*





### *The Monastery*

*The monastery courtyard was another level we designed for a daylight theme, but it was later changed to a nighttime level. We were hoping to create beautiful architecture that had been taken over by the jungle. The monastery has a winged maiden statue in the center of a Spanish fountain with intricate carving details on the floor and walls. Again, we borrowed heavily from the temples of Cambodia and transplanted the ideas to a Spanish courtyard.*

*When developing environments, we always place our characters in gameplay situations to give a better idea of the mood of the level.*







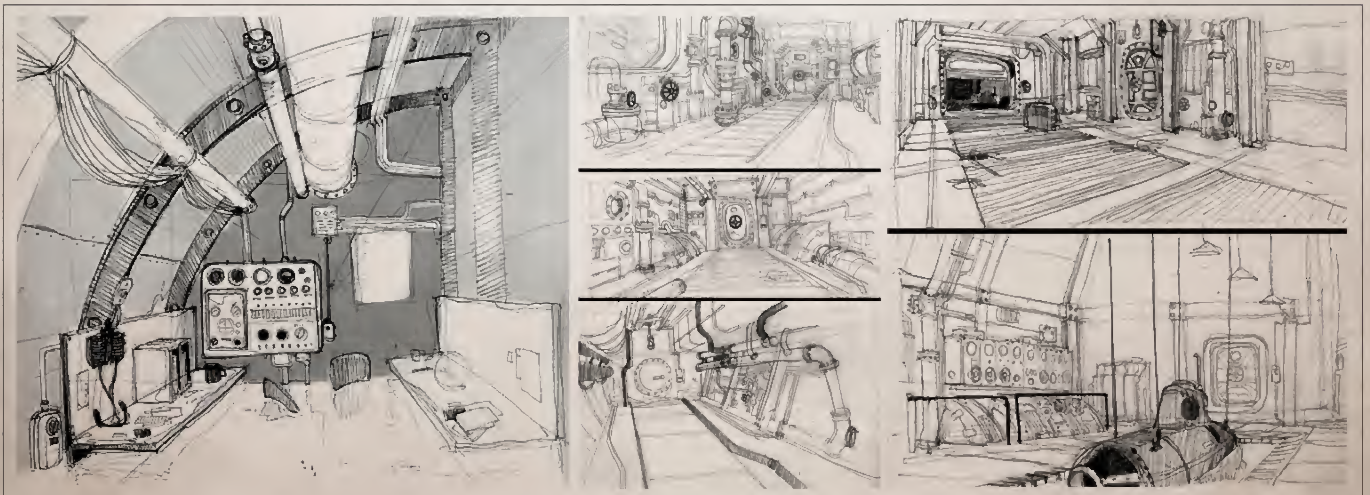
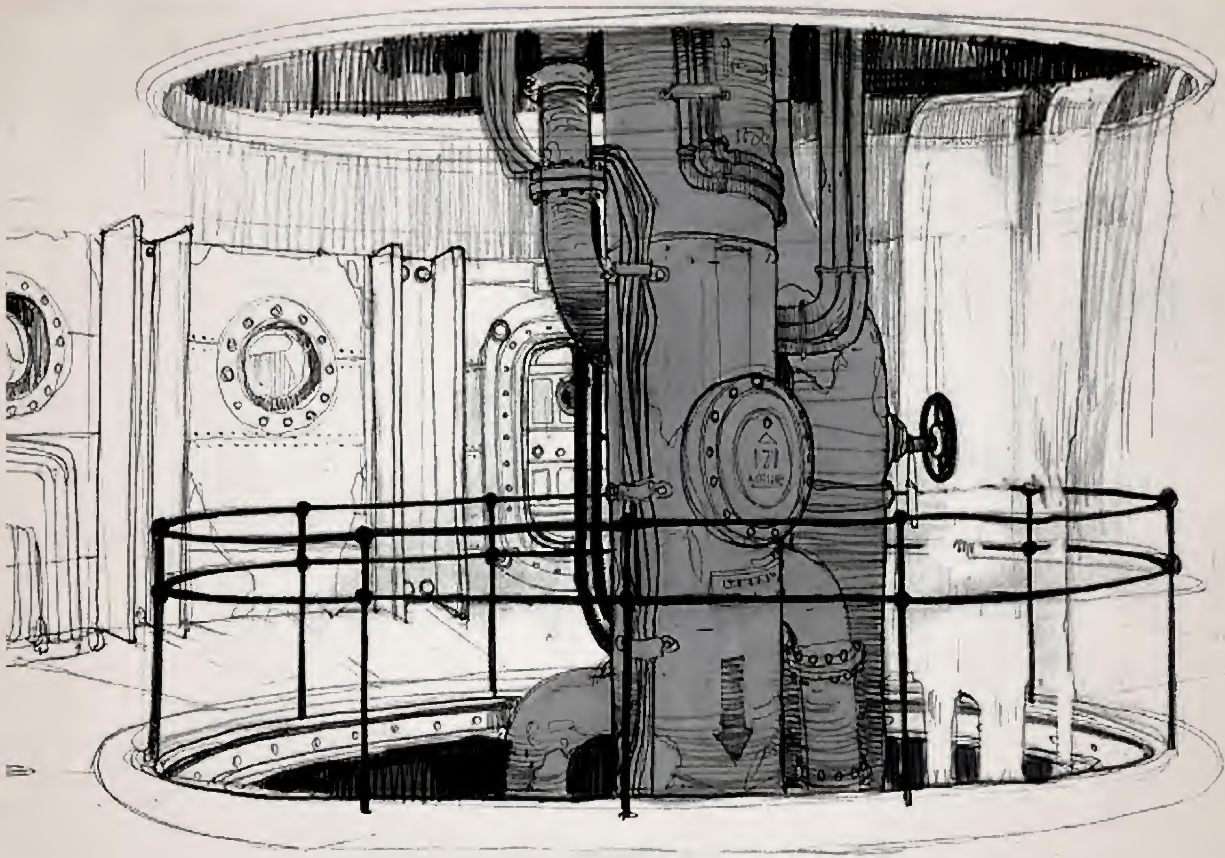
### *The Vault*

*The vault design was inspired by Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi. We also wanted monolithic prison structures that had some M. C. Escher-like labyrinth forms. This made traversing these narrow catwalks and bridges look perilous and unstable. We wanted to give the impression that this maze was huge, with multiple levels crisscrossing each other and misdirecting players to dead ends and fatal traps.*

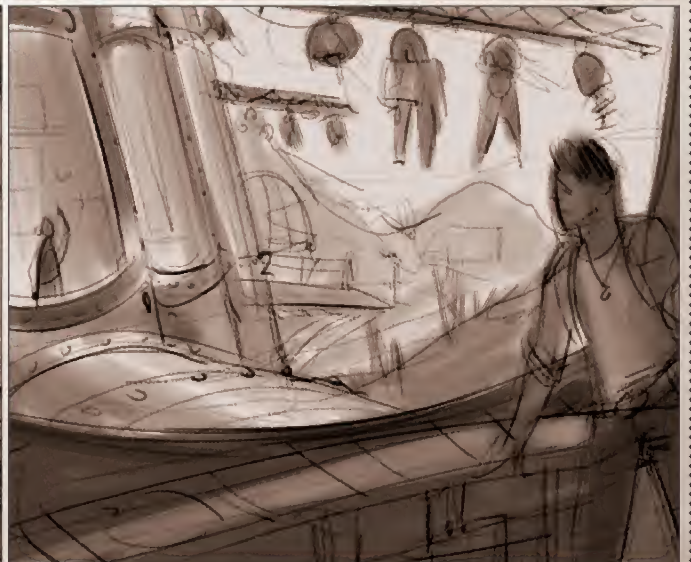
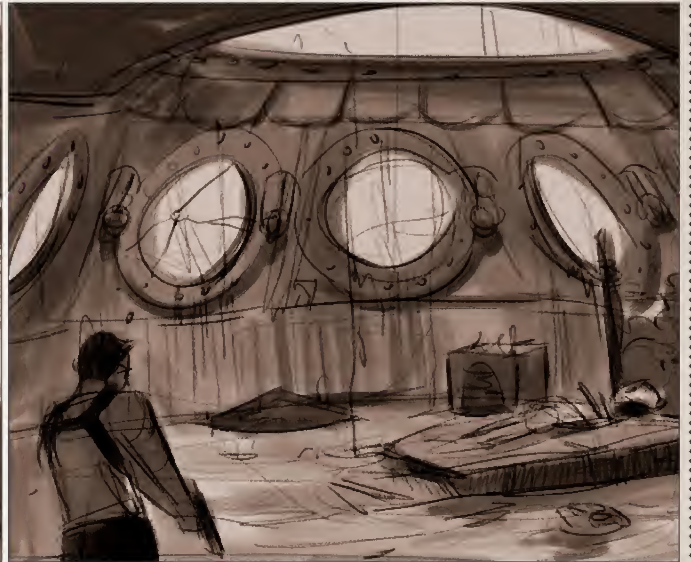
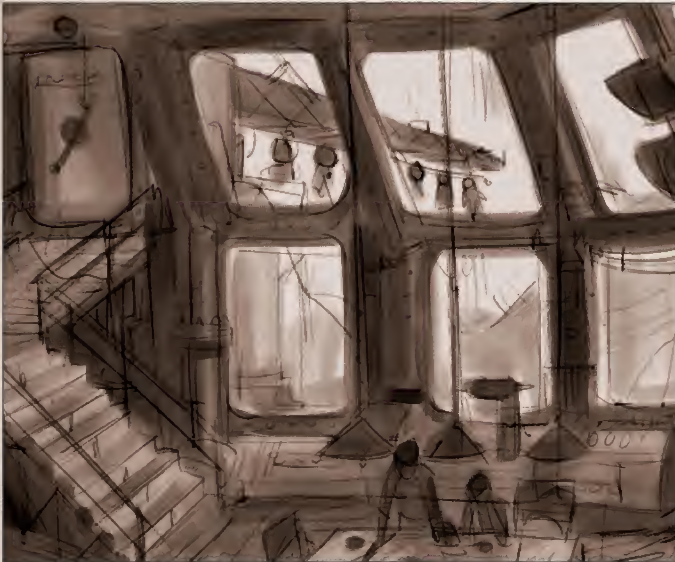
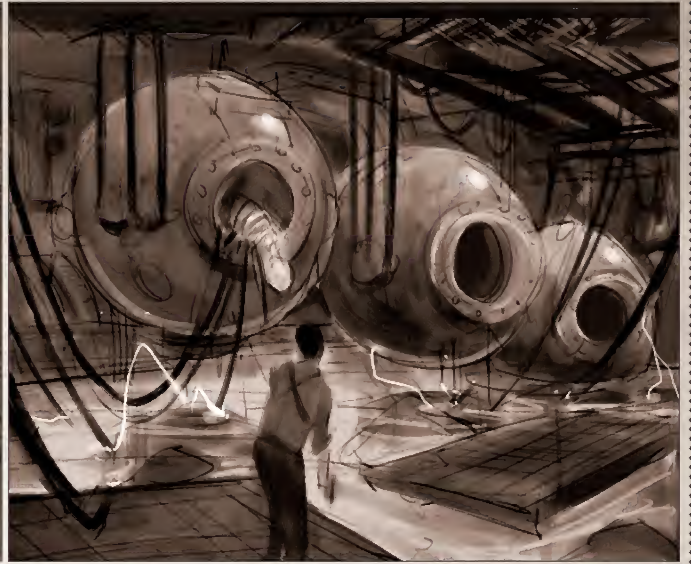


## The Facility

The submarine facility was inspired by old World War II German mechanical designs—big pipes, nuts and bolts, pressure valves, and gauges. We wanted to design spaces that led players through these tubular corridors, then opened up to a bigger metal cavern. A space feels larger when you emerge from a smaller, constricted space. The pipes and cables control light and darkness and help lead players in a certain direction.





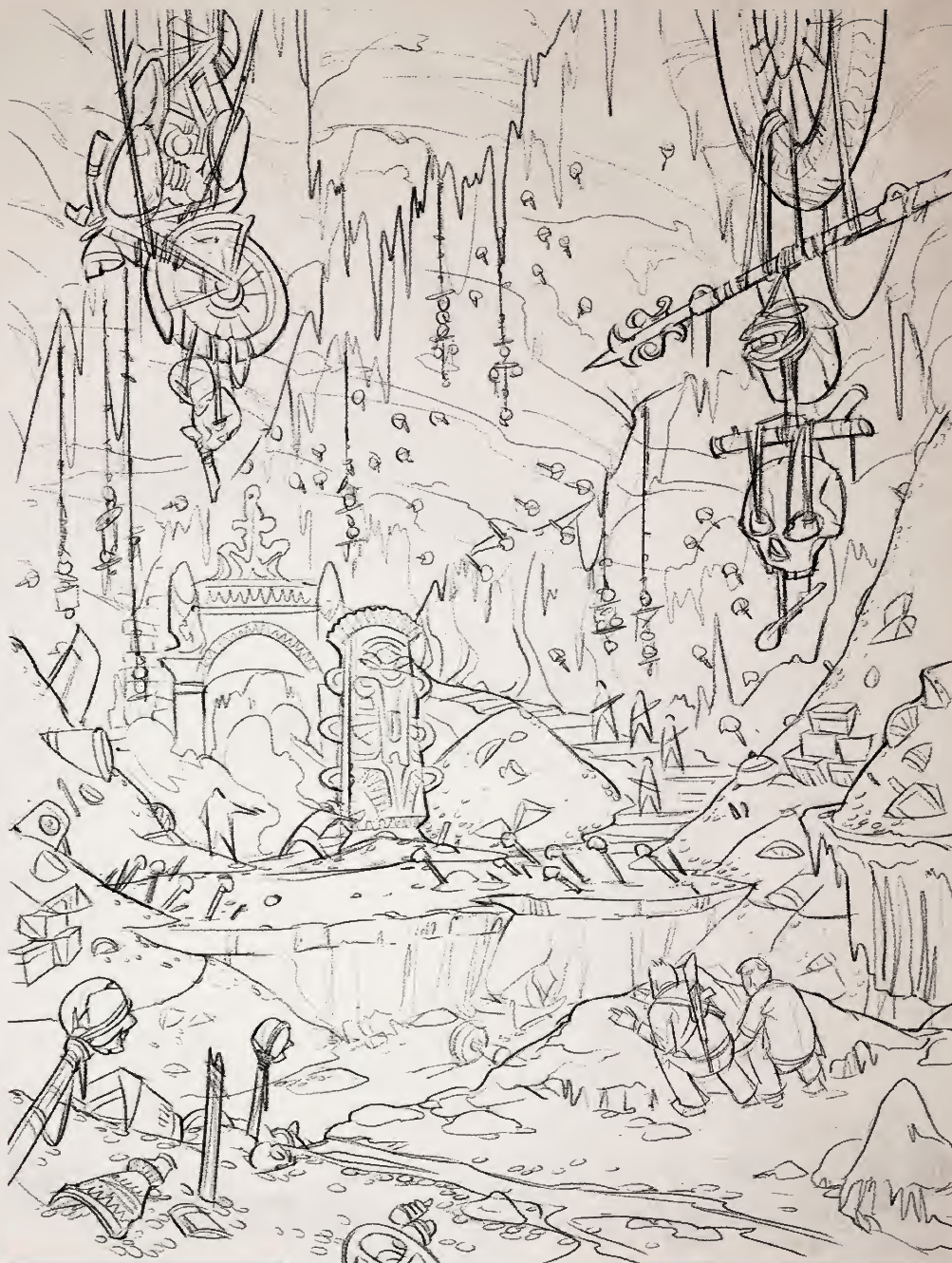


*We were hoping to design several hydraulic machines with large tanks and rubber cables strung everywhere like vines. We made water spill down ceilings and structures to make it look like a waterfall. It was almost like building a cave and a jungle, using the same design shapes and principles but substituting them with human-constructed elements.*



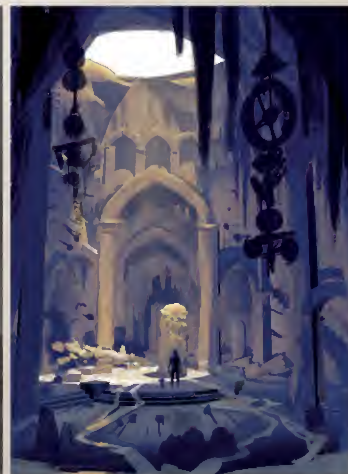
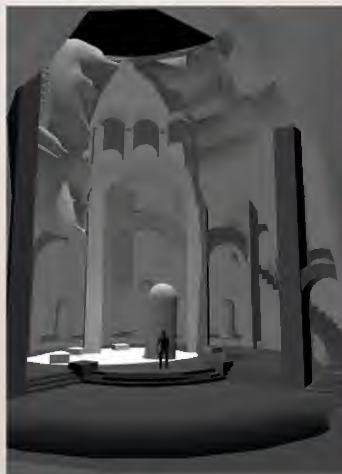


We were inspired by traditional Egyptian sarcophagi but gave them a precolonial America design treatment. We also exaggerated the size and made the carvings more elaborate.



### *The Cavern*

The cavern was designed to frame the sarcophagus and keep the focus on it. The cavern is of Western design, but we got inspiration from an ancient city called Petra, where the structures were carved from the mountainside. It is interesting to see a precolonial design, centered in a cathedral-like structure and adorned by Witchcraft-inspired talismans.











### ***Final Showdown***

*For our adrenaline-filled finale, we wanted Drake hanging on to a cargo helicopter as it whips him around, quickly transporting players to the final boss fight on the cargo ship. Coming from the jungle, which has a cooler blue and green palette, we transition into the final, most dangerous fight and turned the scene red from the fire and sunset. Then we increased the intensity and changed the mood dramatically with rain and lightning flashes.*





*Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*

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# UNUSED IDEAS

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## Environmental Concepts

*We made several exploratory concepts to inspire the game designers and environment artists. Most of them made it into the game, but some unfortunately did not fit with the story beats or the scope of the gameplay. This was one of the concepts that took inspiration from Petra, as if the ancients had carved a cave city in a big sinkhole with waterfalls. The image below was a jungle exploration, where we thought about having players stealthily traversing the river and silently taking out enemy sentries one by one.*





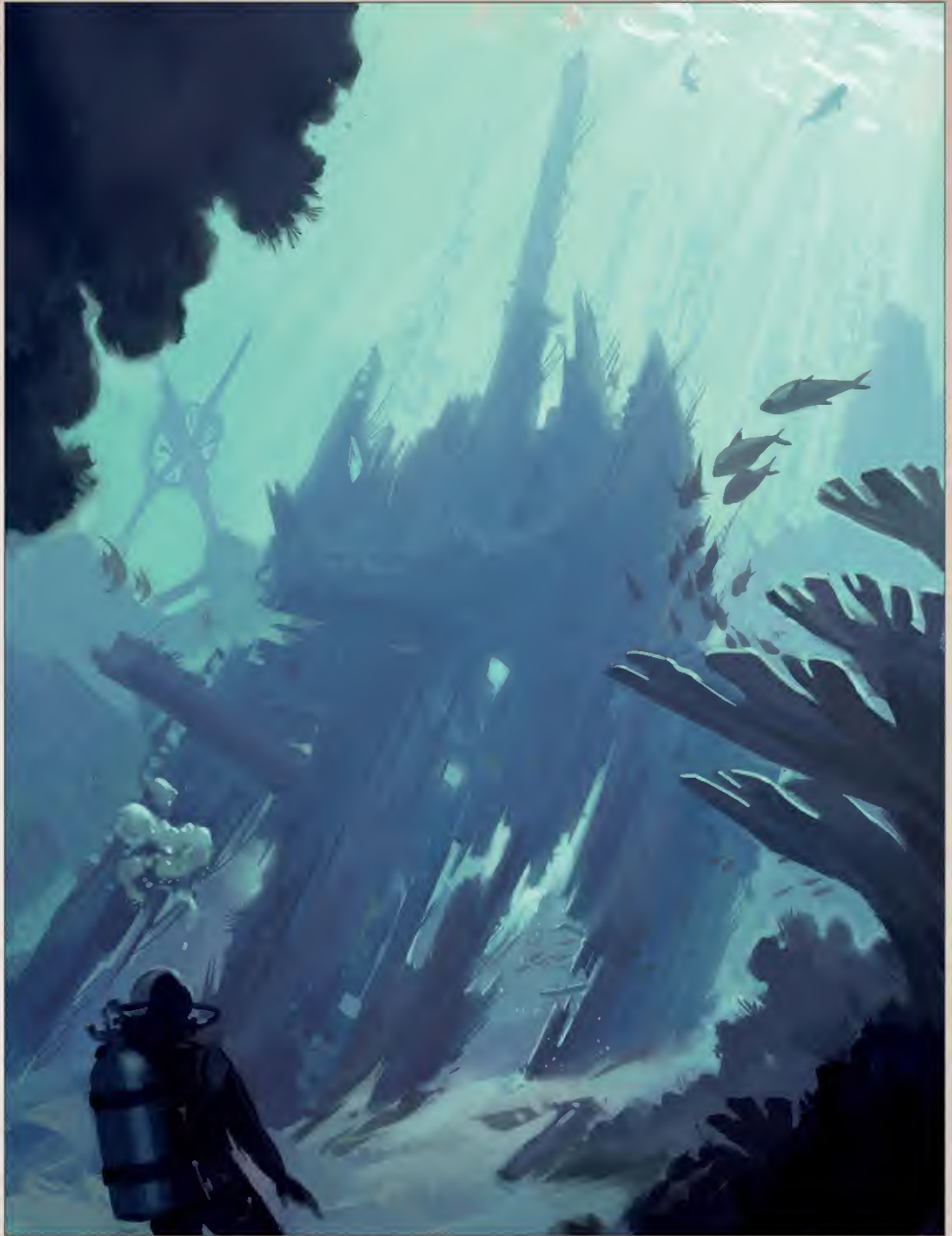


*We always try to create interesting gameplay scenarios when we devise our environments. Some of these ideas (like the flooding ship) may not have made it into the first Uncharted, but we revisited these ideas in later games to see if we could integrate them into the story.*



*We always wanted to make an underwater level. So we created this Spanish colony that was swallowed by the sea, like Atlantis. We were experimenting with the diving mechanics and actually created this entire city to explore underwater. There were several challenges, including: How would it be lit? What would stop players from just swimming anywhere and getting lost? How could we keep the frame rate in check, since players are seeing things so fast, as if they are flying?*

*Swimming underwater could open possibilities of exploring caves and going into buildings in a whole different way. Some buildings would be on their side, or have air pockets to explore while walking.*







*The sunken ruin was one of our favorite levels to design, since it was so different from anything we'd done. We were experimenting with different aquatic life, like schools of fish, sharks, kelp forests, and coral reefs. We also had underwater vehicles to enhance mobility. Designing an underwater city was like making the temple-jungle level out of different kinds of plants and animals. It would have been one of our more interesting and challenging levels to pull off, but it didn't make it into the game.*